

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

**PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**REP. MAZIE HIRONO SUPPORTS RECORD FUNDING FOR  
SERVICEMEMBERS AND VETERANS**

***Hirono Votes for Largest Increase in Veterans' Budget for  
Benefits and Health Care***

**Washington, D.C.** – Rep. Mazie Hirono voted today in support of legislation to provide critical funding for American troops, veterans, and their families. The bill, H.R. 2642, appropriates over \$109 billion for military construction and veterans' programs for FY08, \$4 billion above the President's request. H.R. 2642 passed overwhelmingly on the House floor by a vote of 409 yeas to 2 nays.

"This bill honors the dedicated service of our military personnel and veterans, who have up until now been denied the quality housing, health care, and benefits that they have rightfully earned," said Rep. Hirono. "The historic level of funding that the legislation provides will expand and improve services to more than 102,000 veterans in Hawaii who have served our country faithfully."

The military construction and veterans affairs spending bill provides the largest single increase in the 77-year history of the Veterans Administration (VA), increasing the VA's budget by \$6.7 billion above the FY07 level. H.R. 2642 funds the hiring of more qualified medical practitioners to improve medical services for veterans, reduce waiting

times for doctor appointments, and assist veterans suffering from traumatic brain injury, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, mental health care issues, and lost limbs so that they can rebuild their lives. The provision of improved medical care services will benefit 5.8 million patients, including about 263,000 veterans returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The appropriations bill enhances accountability by increasing funding for the VA's Inspector General to improve services for veterans and their families and to prevent and deter potential waste, fraud, and inefficiency. Veterans will be able to utilize a toll-free telephone and web-based hotline to report on deficiencies in VA medical facilities and care.

Veterans also benefit from the bill's \$46.5 billion appropriation for veterans' benefits, including compensation, readjustment benefits, and pensions. More than 1,100 new claims processors will be hired to significantly reduce the 400,000 claims backlog for veterans waiting for benefits.

Major veterans groups have strongly endorsed the bill, including Veterans of Foreign Wars, American Legion, Disabled Veterans of America, Paralyzed Veterans of America, Military Officers Association of America, Association of the United States Army, National Association for Uniformed Services, and AMVets.

In addition to assisting veterans, H.R. 2642 invests in better barracks, housing, and training facilities for troops and provides funding to strengthen the military by beginning the process of adding 65,000 Army, 27,000 Marine, and 9,000 National Guard and Reserve troops.

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